COMPANION CROPS FOR FORAGE SEEDINGS
(Experimental Forms News)

Experiments carried out over a number of years at the Beaverlodge Experimental Station have shown that the date of seeding or harvesting the nurse crop is not nearly so important to subsequent meadow stands as the type of nurse crop employed.

Where a nurse crop of oats was cut at different dates, from the early milk stage through to full maturity, the meadow stands were not appreciably affected. In individual years some differences did occur since much depends on the weather after the removal of the nurse crop. If moist conditions prevail the grass and clover seedings benefit by the early removal of the nurse crop, but if the season continues dry their growth is slow and the plantlets may suffer more from sun and wind than from the continued competition of the nurse crop. Over a period of years, however, these seasonal variations largely counter-balance.

In another trial where seedlings of oats with grasses and clovers were made at eight successive weekly dates commencing as soon as feasible in the spring the meadow hay yields the subsequent year were only slightly favoured by the medium to late seedings.

More important in seeding forage crops is the type of nurse crop employed. An experiment using an early and a late variety of wheat; three varieties of oats, viz., early, intermediate and late; and two varieties of barley, indicated that the growth habit of the companion crop is more important than its maturity period. Thus, both the early and late varieties of wheat functioned equally well as nurse crops, while all varieties of oats served as poor nurse crops if sown at standard rates. The performance of the barleys differed widely. The short-strawed, open type Olli variety suppressed the forage seedlings much less than the more leafy, ranker growing Hannchen variety. The merits of flax as a companion crop to forage seedings are well known and are undoubtedly due to the distinctive growth form of this crop.

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